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Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, D. C. 20554

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NEWS MEDIA CONTACT:
Maureen Peratino at 202-418-0506

COMMISSION PROPOSES TO REFORM SATELLITE LICENSING PROCEDURES

Washington, DC -- Today, the Commission proposed to reform its satellite licensing process. In light of increased global competition, the proposals aim to expedite delivery of satellite services to the public and reduce economic costs associated with regulatory delay. In addition, the proposed reforms will enable us to promote spectrum efficiency and better respond to technological innovation.

Satellite applications often involve requests to operate satellite systems in the same frequency bands. Operations by multiple systems in the same bands create the potential for interference among these systems. Consequently, the Commission has considered all potentially conflicting applications together in "processing rounds." To resolve interference problems, the Commission affords applicants the opportunity to negotiate a solution that would accommodate all proposed systems. Those negotiations could delay licensing by months or years, thereby delaying service to the public.

In a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM), the Commission set forth two alternative space station licensing proposals. The first proposes to replace processing rounds with a new procedure called "first-come, first-served." Under this approach, the Commission would consider the first application for specific spectrum and/or orbit location. Subsequently filed applications would be included in a queue according to their date of filing. The purpose of this proposal is to expedite satellite licensing by avoiding the need to consider multiple applications together or for applicants to resolve complex issues among themselves. The second proposal is to modify the current processing round approach. Under this alternative, the NPRM proposes establishing a 60-day deadline for completing negotiations and requests comment on certain other reforms.

The NPRM also proposes other satellite licensing streamlining initiatives. Those proposals include eliminating financial qualifications in conjunction with strengthening the milestone requirements, eliminating the satellite anti-trafficking rule and streamlining the replacement satellite application procedure.

Action by the Commission February 14, 2002, by Notice of Proposed Rulemaking and First Report and Order (FCC 02-45). Chairman Powell, Commissioners Abernathy, Copps and Martin, with Commissioner Abernathy issuing a separate statement.

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International Bureau contact: Steven Spaeth at 202-418-1539

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